The Rise and fall of Bornu Empire

The Birth of Bornu Empire had its seeds sown during its predecessor, Kanem Empire's expansion. Kanem's expansion peaked during the long and energetic reign of Mai Dunama Dabbalemi (ca. 1221–1259), of the Sayfawa dynasty. Dabbalemi initiated diplomatic exchanges with sultans in North Africa. During his reign, he declared jihad against the surrounding tribes and initiated an extended period of conquest. However, he also destroyed the national *Mune* cult and thus precipitated widespread revolt culminating in the uprise of *the Tubu* and *the Bulala*. The former was quenched, but the latter continued to linger on, leading finally to the retreat of the Sayfawa from Kanem to Bornu c. 1380

The Bornu empire is just the Kanem Empire which relocated to fertile land of Bornu, southwest of Lake Chad(now North eastern Nigeria), due to the invasion of Bulala invaders who killed five of the seven Mais(emperors),between the period of 1359-83, which forced the rulers to relocate their capital from Njimi to that of Bornu. The relocation happened during 1380-90 period, prior to which Njimi was ruled by Sayfawa dynasty, thus the Bornu empire, named after its capital came into being in historical texts; of which the main contributors are German explorer Heinrich Barth (who found Royal chronicle named Girgam), Sir Herbert Palmer (a colonial supervisor) and Yves Francois Urvey (a French army officer and historian).

During the first three-quarters of the 15th century, fifteen mais occupied the throne. Around 1460, Mai Ali Dunamami defeated his rivals and began the consolidation of Bornu. He built a fortified capital at Ngazargamu, to the west of Lake Chad (in present-day Niger), the first permanent home a Sayfawa mai had enjoyed in a century. The Sayfawa rejuvenation was so successful that by the early 16th century, Mai Idris Katakarmabe (1487–1509) was able to defeat the Bulala and retake Njimi, the former capital. The core of empires administration remained at

Ngazargamu due to its rich farmlands which were better suited to the raising of cattle.

Bornu peaked during the reign of the statesman Mai Idris Alooma (c. 1571–1603). The administrative reforms and military brilliance of Alooma sustained the empire until the mid-17th century, when its power began to fade. By the late 18th century, Bornu rule extended only westward, into the land of the Hausa. Around that time, Fulani people, invading from the west, were able to make major inroads into Bornu. By the early 19th century, Kanem-Bornu was clearly an empire in decline, and in 1808 Fulani warriors conquered Ngazargamu, the Bornu Capital. *Usman dan Fodio* led the Fulani thrust and proclaimed a jihad (holy war) on the irreligious Muslims of the area. His campaign eventually affected Kanem-Bornu and inspired a trend toward Islamic orthodoxy. But *Muhammad al-Kanem* contested the Fulani advance. Kanem was a Muslim scholar and non-Sayfawa warlord who had put together an alliance of Shuwa Arabs, Kanembu, and other semi-nomadic peoples. He eventually built a capital at *Kukawa* (in present-day Nigeria) in 1814. Sayfawa mais remained titular monarchs until 1846. In that year, the last mai, in league with *Ouadda*i tribesmen, precipitated a civil war. It was at that point that Kanem's son, *Umar*, became king, thus ending one of the longest dynastic reigns in regional history.

Umar was defeated by the Sudanese warrior (Rabah Zubayr) in 1893, and Dikwa (54 miles [87 km] east-northeast of Maiduguri) served as Rābiḥ's headquarters until he was killed by the French in 1900.

Area, Population and Housing:

The Bornu Empire (1380s–1893) current geographical location was a state of what is now northeastern Nigeria, in time becoming even larger than Kanem, incorporating areas that are today parts of Chad, Niger, Sudan, and Cameroon which existed from 1380s to 1893.

The royal chronicles of Girgam mention that Kanem-Bornu's capital city Birni N'Gazargamu may have a population of 200,000 in its initial period which expanded to 5000000 in 1892A.D.

Major architectural of Birni Gazargamu includes four mosques which could hold up to 12,000 worshippers. It was surrounded by a 25-foot (7.6 m) wall and more than 1-mile (1.6 km) in circumference. Many large streets extended from the esplanade and connected to 660 roads.

The main building and structure were built with red brick. The houses too contained foundations of bricks. Most houses were made of straw and adobe while some with red bricks and few were made out of stone.

ACHIEMENTS:

Highly Organized Political System:
The royal family was at the heart of the political system meaning that the head of the Sayfawa family was also the mai.It seems that to prevent wars of succession, the *chiroma*, generally the eldest son or the brother of the mai was designated during the lifetime of the mai. Members of the royal family were also important office-holders.
For example, *the magira* (the queen mother) held for a long time the highest number of fiefs in the kingdom while the first wife of the mai, *the gumsu*, was responsible for the palace duties with the three other wives of the mai. As a consequence, the stability of the empire was synonymous with the stability of the royal family.
The *mainin kenandi* was the Islamic advisor of the mai whereas the *kaigama* was in charge of the armies of Kanem-Bornu. This highly structured political system could also be found in the territorial organization of the kingdom. Indeed, the empire of Bornu was organized territorially and divided into different administrative regions. For example, the *galadima* was supposed to be the viceroy of the Western part of the kingdom.

Complex territorial Organization:
One of the striking features of the empire of Kanem-Bornu was its complex territorial organization which allowed it to survive for more than a millennium. Diplomatic correspondence and oral history confirm that the Kanem-Bornu Empire was an empire with different types of borders. Some of them may have been rather vague, such as those along the Saharan trade route, whereas others could have been precisely delimited, such as the borders south of Lake Chad with the Bagirmi or westwards with the Hausa states. Moreover, the core of Bornu and the newly conquered regions had sensibly different territorial structures. In metropolitan
Bornu, a double fief system enabled the mais and later the shehus to levy taxes and troops in their empire. The first one was a personal fief where the fief-holder, *the chima jilibe* owned a fief over people, the second one was territorial: here the fief-holder, *the chima chidibe* was in charge of a specific territory. This system enabled the empire to control its sedentary population as well as incorporating its nomadic or semi-

nomadic subjects such as the Shuwa Arabs. This administrative structure was present in metropolitan Bornu whereas the satellite regions were still administered by a local ruler.

Military Heroics and Administration of Idris Aluma;

One of the most famous episodes of Bornoan history was the correspondence between mai Idriss Alooma and the Ottoman Sultan Murad III during the 1570s, as Mai Idriss desired to renew an alliance with the Ottomans. Their conquest of Tripoli in 1551 had already given the empire of Kanem-Bornu access to Ottoman mercenaries who had migrated across the Sahara. Their firearms and tactical superiority resulted in victories which facilitated the conquest of territories located at the south and west of Bornu.

The empires most renowned emperor, Idris Aluma was particularly famous for his reforms. These include reform in legal reforms when he Embraced the Sharia(Islamic Laws),his genius military tactics and strategies which include introduction of fire arms, military reorganization, Scorched earth tactics as well as the use of *Berber camels, Kotoko boatmen, and iron-helmeted musketeers* trained by Ottoman military advisers. He is also applauded for his efforts in improving Public Security, as his reign is said to be so safe that "*a lone woman clad in gold might walk with none to fear but God*".

He is also credited with reforms in transportation in the form of improved boats in Lake Chad, use of camels in place of donkeys, and clearing and making roads for trans-Saharan trade route.

His political achievements include diplomatic relations with Tripoli, Egypt, and the Ottoman Empire, which sent a 200-member ambassadorial party across the desert to Alooma's court at Ngazargamu.

Trans-Saharan Trade as a Source of Power:

It is striking that the capital of Kanem-Bornu, Birni Gazargamo, was located at the heart of a salt producing region in Bornu. This salt was sold throughout the Central Sudan and was used in the textile industry and for medicinal and culinary purposes. The salt trade did not reach the

same trans-Saharan dimension as slave trade but it was still possible to evoke a regional market for this product

Also Bornu was known for its horses, so major achievements of Bornu emperors could be said to be related to the trade which included exports of natron (sodium carbonate), cotton, kola nuts, ivory, ostrich feathers, perfume, wax, and hides, and imports of glass, muskets, horses and silk. The most important trade was of slaves which also contributed to major source of income.

From 1383 to 1893, the Bornu Empire was one of the longest reigning empires in African continent whose mark on its history is most striking and unique in its own right.